

# Margaret Sangster's Talks On Home Circle Questions.

## HOLIDAY FUN-MAKING FOR THE YOUNG FOLKS

Return of Boys From College  
Is a Season of Great Joy  
in the Family.

Christmas Should Be Celebrated by a Dance or Some Other Entertainment.



MRS. MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

By MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

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THE bells of merry Christmas never sound a sweeter peal than when they bring our young people home for the holidays. You have no idea, unless you have young people of your own, what a vacancy there is in the house when they go away to school and colleges. Phil worried over with his careless ways, his things that were left like a blazed trail all over the house, and his rushing in and out, meteor fashion, but when he was fairly off for the autumn term, you, being his mother, probably sat down in your room and cried. You missed the boy terribly, and so did his father, although he was shy about confessing it. Now your lad is coming back for Christmas, and is bringing with him a chum whose home is so far away that it must do without his presence until the year rolls around. You are sorry for the mother in the distance who cannot see her boy, and, as he is Phil's friend, you will mother him all you can for her sake.

### A VERY SOFT SIDE FOR DEAR ONES AT HOME.

"Marjorie is at home this evening," confides the banker to the man at his side in the train. "I don't know what all this road. Did you ever see the express so slow before?" He fumes, though the locomotive is forging ahead as fast as usual.

The gray-haired father is as eager as a lover to meet his Marjorie again. He fairly sprints up the slippery street, and his latchkey is not in the door before there is a rush of light feet inside, the door is thrown wide open, and there is a vision of beauty and home delight for whoever may be passing by. In the background the mother and the younger children; in the front of the group Marjorie, with her laughing face, her dark eyes, her eager voice, her arms around her father's neck in a hug that means twenty years of love.

"You old darling!" she cries, and the passer-by hears as the door shuts, and he goes on, musing over the little household scene, all revealed in a second of time. "Who would have thought," he murmurs, "that the old financier, hard as nails on 'change, had a soft side like that?" Ah, my friend, many a man hard as granite to the rough world has a very soft side for his dear ones at home.

### Distinct Epochs in Household History.

In household history there are several distinct epochs. One covers the time when the children are all babies together, and a beautiful time it is. Another, and an even more beautiful time, comes when they are all growing up at the same time; are young people with the needs, wishes, aspirations and plans befitting this stage of their lives. Of later I cannot now speak, but they follow on naturally, the days of the first wedding in the family and the first parting of the ways, and so on.

The season when the young people are all between sixteen and twenty-two is not one of calm weather. It implies a lot of expense and a good deal of anxiety, but it is crisscrossed with interest and brimmed with joy. When the Christmas holidays set free the boys and girls who are at school and bring back the absentees the whole community feels the stir and responds to the call of the new life. Winter may do his stormy worst. There is spring in the air.

### CHRISTMAS IS THE SEASON OF REVELS.

Christmas is the season for revels. When our young people come home, it is their right to take the center of the stage. Marjorie and Edith, Philip and Francis, will never again stand where they do now, at a place so care-free, so spontaneous, so full of heart's-ease and heart's delight. Why the very strumming of a fiddle sets their feet to beating out the time of a tune, and the holidays will be incomplete without a Christmas dance. The boys, not less than the girls, are deeply interested in this, and their ties, shoes and dress or dinner coats are matters of great concern. As for the girls, their pretty frocks and ribbons and the bravery of their attire set off their flower-like charm, and it is a childish disposition, indeed, that does not admit the rare and exquisite loveliness of a maiden in her teens. Here is the beauty of the early dawn. Revels are in order.

Preparations for a Christmas dance may be partially made before the young people come home, the most important requisite being a check from papa. It need not be so very large. The sinews of war thus assured, the mother may have the house swept and garnished.

### WHEN POLLY PLAYS FOR DANCING.

Before any entertainment that signifies hospitality is ever given anywhere, it is to the womanly mind absolutely essential that there shall be shining cleanliness. This obtained, and every corner immaculate, from the eaves to the cellar, the musicians may be engaged. That is, if there is not a daughter at home who can manage the music for a little home dance. When there is, why hire anyone from outside?

When Polly played for dancing, her slender fingers flew so fast across the ivory keys they seemed to wink at you; the music bubbled under the magic of her hand. As if the merry notes were made to join the festive band.

When Polly struck the measure of the two-step or the waltz. The oldest grey young again and laughed at Time's assaults. While lovely Sweet and twenty and merry Sweet Sixteen Went floating as thistle-down the giddy waves between. For pity's sake, don't make the common mistake of thinking that to have a good time at a Christmas party for young people you are obliged to spend a great deal of money. You may have an orchestra if you choose, or a Hungarian band, but a lad with a violin and a girl at a piano can furnish excellent music for youthful dancers who all know one another and whose fathers and mothers are looking on. When the Virginia reel is reached the fathers and mothers may join in if they like.

The invitations will be sent about informally, or given as people meet at the post-office or in the confectioner's, after the boys and girls come home. No long notice is necessary. And the young folk themselves will put up the Christmas wreaths, the holly and pine, cedar and fir. They will garland the stairs and festoon the pictures and hang wreaths in the windows, and the simplest home will be transformed into a bower.

### A HOT SUPPER IS FINE ON A COLD NIGHT.

Refractions may be what you please. A hot supper is fine on a cold night. But you may have less if you prefer. I remember a Christmas party where they had buckwheat cakes and maple syrup. Cider and mince pies, though indigestible, may answer. The chief thing is that you have something to eat, and something to talk over, and one may have dainty cakes, and another a hearty meal, and both will score a success.

Charades, tableaux, guessing games, may be substituted for a dance, but let the young people have some Christmas fun when they are at home for the holidays.

We are so busy and so sober-paced, we carry so many burdens, and we are so oppressed with both prosperity and adversity, that we need beyond our power to express it the escape valve of Christmas. We need to be young again and to enjoy the holiday life with the children.

Of all the dear days in Christmas day, The very dearest dear, The crown and the clasp and the topmost sheaf Of the whole rejoicing year.

Then, far and near, Kris Kringle bells Their fancy music wake, And the dancing feet of boys and girls A sweeter music make.

And, deep in cloistered woods, the trees, Hemlock and pine and fir, Thrill to the chilly winter breath And waft a wave of merrh.

And the flying feet of boys and girls Go gayly to and fro, And merry, merry Christmas rings On all the winds that blow.

## WHEN A BOY CROSSES HIS EQUATORIAL LINE

Ceases to Think of a Girl as a  
Nuisance and Regards Her  
as Adorable.

It Is Not Wise for Parents to  
Ban Youthful Intimacies  
Between Sexes.

By MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

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LITTLE schoolmarm, standing up very prim and precise. "Class in geography, please define the equator."

All speaking at once: "The equator is a supposed or imaginary circle which passes around the earth at an equal distance from both poles and which divides the earth into north and south hemispheres."

"Very good, very good, indeed."

What has this to do with the boy's equator? Wait a bit and you will see.

To every son of Adam arrives a day when he crosses his personal equator. He then leaves behind him the northern hemisphere in which he is a being under authority, hidden here and sent there, occasionally when very small, spanked and sent to bed, but allowed as a counterbalance a perfectly splendid license in the matter of outdoor sport, in swimming, skating, and playing ball. His school days are spent in this northern hemisphere until he is fourteen, or fifteen, and although masters are not the fierce tyrants they once were he comes in for more or less hardness there.

But he reaches the equator. Some fellows reach it sooner than others. Every fellow reaches it before he can cross into the southern hemisphere of young manhood.

It is the hour when he first ceases to think of a girl as a nuisance and condescends to her as a necessary evil, and looks on her as an adorable creature whose favor is an honor.

### WHEN EVE HAS MADE HER FIRST IMPRESSION.

The boy on whom Eve has made her first impression has crossed the imaginary line between childhood and youth, imaginary, yet how real. Life will never be the same again.

Hitherto it has been a battle to get him to wash his hands. Dirt is dear to the small boy. When the grime on his face and the soil on his hands suggest old mahogany, when the original color of his skin is hidden beneath successive strata of earthy matter, Bobby loathes soap and water. He argues and protests and declares that he is clean, when a Spartan mother marches him sternly back to the basin and stands over him while he scrubs. It is the only way. Between the period of curls and kilts and the period of tuxedo is a great gulf fixed, a gulf of dirt that women hate and boys adore.

With the advent of interest in girls, the hour of interest in the bath tub strikes. Now, who so careful and fastidious about teeth and hair and finger nails as our boy, lately so primitive, who so anxious to have polished shoes and well-cressed trousers and the right gloves and the right cap and the proper tie? Primitive no longer, the boy has crossed the equator and fairly riots in civilization. He has reached the southern zone. Every day sees a change in him. Every day is for him an advance.

### SHOULD HAVE NICE GIRLS FOR HIS FRIENDS.

Fathers there are and mothers, unwise in their generation, who forget that they were once young, and who by ridicule or opposition now sow the boy's pathway with thorns. They do not realize that nothing is so wholesome, nothing so elevating and so broadening for a lad, nothing so much to be desired, as that he shall have nice girls for his friends. The era of sentiment is not yet. He will be devoted to a dozen girls before he falls in love with one. It will do him no harm. A boy is safer in the society of a sweet, pure, and charming young girl, with her mother somewhere near as an unobtrusive chaperon, than he is anywhere else on earth. A boy who cares nothing for girls loses the best chance for symmetrical development.

A mother once said to me: "I don't know what to do with my Betty. She is restless and flighty. We will not permit a boy to step across our door, but Willie Jenkins comes to the gate and whistles, and if my back is turned off Betty flies."

"Dear lady," I said, as I say to those mothers of whom she is a type, whenever I can get their ear, "why do you fly in the face of nature, the oldest mother of us all? Why behave as if a mere boy, a neighbor's son, were a wolf or a bear? Why make attractive by prohibition what would otherwise seem of slight consequence? No daughter of mine should answer a boy's whistle at the gate. On the contrary, I would set wide my door and light my fire and my lamp and let Betty make fudge and invite Willie Jenkins and his friends to come and help her. They should come openly, as a matter of course, and Betty should have her little train of lads to fetch and carry, and without one silly thought of love-making or pairing-off or anything but good and innocent comradeship."

### Needs Guidance of Motherhood.

When a boy crosses the equator he needs as never before the sympathy, guidance, and good will of motherhood, and the natural association with young people in groups, that should never be denied him. Willie will not resist Betty by a whistle, or Betty demean herself by an answer, if they are permitted the proper acquaintance.

About the time that a boy crosses the equator his friends are likely to observe in him a very large accession of self-conceit. He becomes aggressive and opinionated. In common parlance, he may be said to "know it all." Older people smile tolerantly, or frown irritably according to their temperament, as they listen to the youth's ready verdict given on all occasions. They understand as those near him in age do not that he is passing through a phase, and that a year or two later he will be more modest as well as more manly. The companionship of a slightly older young woman who takes the boy in hand and has patience with him is invaluable at this moment. The stronger the boy and the finer, the more there is in him, the more trying and provoking he may be at the transition stage. By no means should it worry those who love him. It is only the effect of an equatorial gale.

Self-assertiveness, proneness to argue, an obstinate determination to have the last word, are, of course, disagreeable. Yet these are sometimes signs of a strenuous manhood to come, which will be found equal to every emergency and will reflect credit in future days on the home that sent the boy forth and the training he received therein.

### NOT GENUINE.

"Young Kees and his wife seem to be devoted to each other."

"O! that's the way they behave in public. They're not so affectionate at other times."

"Why, I thought they were just a pair of turtle doves."

"No, they're merely a pair of mock turtle doves."—Philadelphia Press.

### NOT GUILTY.

"Henry?" said Mrs. Jellus.

"What is it, my dear?"

"I want to know who this Lou Dillon is I hear you talking so much about in your sleep, and I want the truth, too. You hear me?"

Fortunately, Henry was able to give her the truth and that only.—Houston Chronicle.

### ALMOST BEYOND BELIEF.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Oldcastle, "I used to have the Schumann Etudes, Symphonies, the Chopin Berceuse and Barcarolle and the Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12 all at my fingers' ends."

"My gracious," replied her hostess, "how did you ever stand it?"

The worst I ever had was a felon one time on my left thumb."—Chicago Record-Herald.

### LITTLE WOMAN'S QUERY.

Ethel—Pa, why does Uncle Frank always say "beware of the widows?"

Pa—Because, my child, widows are supposed to be expert in catching husbands.

Ethel—Gracious! I wonder if I'll have to be a widow before I can get married?

Philadelphia Press.

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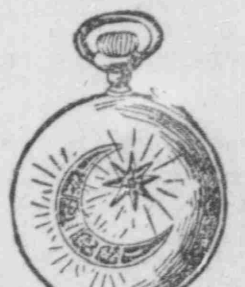
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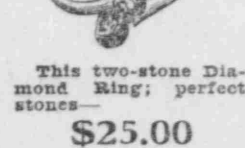
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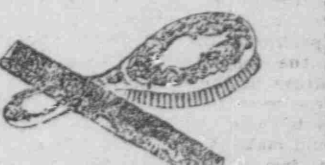
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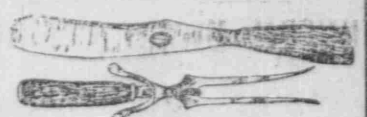
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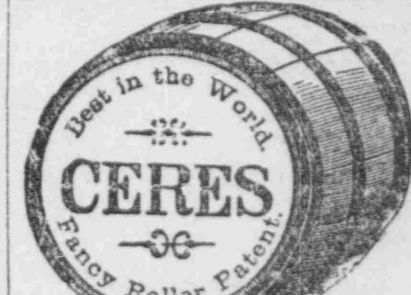
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